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BISHOP DOANE'S
Commencement Sermon.

M D CCC XLV.



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JESUS OF NAZARETH,
WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD,
THE MODEL FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR THE MINISTRY:

THE SERMON
AT THE ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT

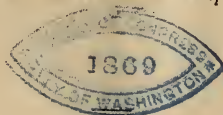
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OF

THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE U. S. OF AMERICA;

BY

THE RIGHT REV. GEORGE WASHINGTON DOANE, D.D., LL.D.,

BISHOP OF NEW JERSEY.



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Burlington:
EDMUND MORRIS, PRINTER.

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M D CCC XLV.

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To

JOHN POTTER, Esq.,

OF PROSPECT, NEAR PRINCETON,

A TRUSTEE FOR MANY YEARS:

A NOBLE BENEFACTOR OF THE CHURCH;

MY KIND AND FAITHFUL FRIEND.

RIVERSIDE, ST. PETER'S DAY, M D CCC XLV.



SERMON.

ACTS X, xxxviii.

JESUS OF NAZARETH ——— WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD.

It is but incidentally, that the Apostle says this of our blessed Saviour, and, as it were, in passing; but what volume could do justice to its pure and perfect beauty! It had been much, if, here and there, a sick man had been healed, a mourner comforted, a sinner softened and forgiven. It had been very much, if, whosoever came to Him had had his sorrows soothed, his children blessed, his dead restored to life. How perfect, in the overflowing fulness of its unreserving self-devotion, that speaking picture of the text, He “went about doing good!” He sought, that He might save, the lost!—*He* had not “where to lay His head.” He was “despised and rejected of men.” The very heel of him that ate his bread was lifted up against Him. And yet, He “went about, doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.” Indefatigable, inexhaustible, unconquerable in love! Was it for a few sick folk, in Galilee, or in Judea, that this was done? The widow’s son, and Jairus’ daughter, and Mary’s brother, Lazarus? A publican or harlot, now and then; a dozen, or a score, of fishermen; “the hundred and twenty,”¹ or “five

¹ Acts, i. 15.

hundred,"¹ at the most, who owned Him in the flesh! No: but for every age, and all the world; long as the Church shall last, far as the Church shall spread: "leaving us an example," the same Apostle writes, "that ye should follow His steps." That blessed One has gone, long since, to Heaven. His bare and bleeding feet traverse the earth no more, to do men good. "When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."² Not, however, till He had made provision, to re-produce Himself, in offices of love, to all the ages of our sinning, suffering, dying race, in that blood-purchased Church, to which He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"³ "the Church which is His body;"⁴ giving commandment to the Apostles, whom He had chosen, to "preach the gospel to every creature,"⁵ and to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them,"⁶ in the eternal tri-une Name. And now, the law of love, living forever in that sacred line of self-perpetuating life, which He ordains, to save and bless the world; and binding upon every living soul that has been gathered in, in its electric chain, is simply this: the Church is only, then, Christ's living Body, the souls of men are only, then, Its living members, when they reflect His living image, as St. Peter sketched it, "who went about doing good." "Love is life's only sign."⁷ "Jesus of Nazareth," "who went about doing good, and healing all that were op-

¹ 1 Corinthians, xv. 6.

² Acts, i. 9.

³ St. Matthew, xxviii. 20.

⁴ Ephesians, i. 22, 23. ⁵ St. Mark, xvi. 15. ⁶ St. Matthew, xxviii. 19. ⁷ Keble.

pressed of the devil, for God was with Him." The Church, to be indeed Christ's Church, must go about doing good. She must apply herself, with unreserving and untiring love, to healing all that are oppressed of the devil. So shall she know, and prove, that God is with her, of a truth.

The Apostle sets before us in few, graphic words, the cause, the curse, and the cure of sin: "healing all them that were oppressed with the devil." Through his seduction, sin came into the world. Bondage to him is its sore curse; the iron entering into the soul, till it is sick, even unto death. The only healer that can cure and set us free, Jesus of Nazareth; and that, as He is crucified and killed. "It shall bruise thy head," whilst "thou," in thy death-struggle, "shalt" but "bruise His heel."¹ "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."² Not without sure and certain hope, however, in the redemption of the Cross, of its deliverance, "from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."² In the midst of this yearning, groaning, agonizing, world, the travail-pains of death grinding the very soul from out its life, the Church, as Jesus Christ, when in the flesh, is mercifully set; with power from God, to heal, redeem, and save. In her, He says, who is, in her, Healer, Redeemer, Saviour, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else."³ The suffering soul, that looks to Him, as He is lifted up in her, in supplicating faith, in her re-

¹ Genesis, iii. 15.

² Romans, viii. 22, 21

³ Isaiah, xlv. 22.

vives, and lives. The name of Jesus is as ointment shed on all his wounds. His word, sweeter than angels' music, soothes and stills the storms and sorrows of his soul. His sins are washed away in the pure stream of living water, that flows out forever from His side. And, with the blood that mingles with it, he receives immortal nurture and eternal life. And, what is realized in one, is fully meant for all. Jesus of Nazareth, went about, healing "*all* that were oppressed of the devil." The Church, that is His, must be like Him, or He owns her not. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me."¹ And then, those fearful words, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment."¹

Beloved brethren, have these fearful words of Jesus Christ no fitness, and no claim, for us? Are we, as a Church—is each of us, as we are members of the Church—going about doing good? Is there, in our administration of the sacred trust, which Jesus Christ reposes in us, healing for "all them that are oppressed of the devil?" Alas, what bitter words! What biting sarcasm, in the thought! The holy Jesus "went about doing good." On foot, He traversed every acre of that blessed land; or found the only respite of His weariness in some rude fisher's boat, upon the passionate Gennesaret. See Him, at one time, tossed with all the fury of its wildest storms.² Behold Him, at another, on the dreary mountain side, alone.³ What hearth of poverty does He not share? What

¹ St. Matthew, xxv. 45; 46. ² St. Luke, viii. 23. ³ St. Matthew, xiv. 23.

house of mourning does He not cheer? What bed of sickness, and of death, does He not soothe? Is there a poor, frail woman, in Samaria, that, with all her frailty, has yearnings for a better hope within her heart? He is sitting with her, in the hot and weary noon, by Jacob's well;¹ to speak to her of living water, that shall satisfy the soul. Has Pharisaic malice wreaked itself on one whose only crime was being with Jesus, and receiving sight from Him; and cast him out of its communion? Already He has heard it, and has found him,² and has given him "peace" and comfort "in believing." A widow wails her only son. Jesus is there, to stop the bier, and give him back to her bereaved, broken heart.³ Two sisters bear a brother to the tomb, which hides, with him, the light that cheered their life. In four days, Jesus comes, and Lazarus has risen.⁴ No leper lifts to Him an unavailing cry. No father speaks in vain to Him, for a demoniac child. The hungry multitudes are fed. The ignorant multitudes are taught. The sinful multitudes are warned. A woman comes to Him, that was a sinner, and breaks a box of ointment on His feet, and wipes them with her flowing hair. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."⁵ Maternal fondness thrusts itself upon Him, to desire a blessing for its offspring, and is turned coldly off; only to be made surer of His gentleness, and richer in His love: "suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for

¹ St. John, iv. 6.

² ix. 35.

³ St. Luke, vii. 15.

⁴ St. John, xi. 44.

⁵ St. Luke, vii. 47.

of such is the kingdom of God.”¹ It was so, that Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good, until He poured His life out upon the Cross. So literally was He present, “to heal all them that were oppressed of the devil.” So manifest was God in Him.

But, now, His Church, His living and life-giving Body, Himself, put in trust, of Him, with the salvation of the world—how does she manifest His glory? What are her triumphs, through the power of His amazing Cross? Where are her trophies of His love and trust, in her? Does she feed the hungry? Does she clothe the naked? Is she eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame? Are the children gathered all, about her knees, and nurtured at her breast? Does she make smooth the pillow of the sick? Is every death-bed soothed and cheered by her? Does she go down, to bear the light of hope into the cell of every felon? Does she go out, to be the chart and compass of the storm-tossed mariner? Are the words of her celestial wisdom heard in all the schools? Is she invoked and owned as the support and consecration of all human laws and earthly governments? Is she acknowledged in the pulses of the city’s ceaseless heart, and not unfelt in scattered hamlet, or by rustic hearth? Are the leaves, which she has charge of, for the healing of the nations, wafted, like maple seeds, on every breeze? Are the feet of her messengers prompt as the impulse of adventure, fleet as the flight of pleasure, present wherever men are found, for duty, or of choice? Does she erect her house of prayer wherever human hearths are

¹ St. Mark, x. 14.

lighted? Are her gates open, day and night, for all who will, to enter in, and be with God? Is there no hungry soul, that looks to her for bread, and does not find it? Are there no widows, that she comforts not? No orphans, that she takes not to her bosom? Is there no sinner, that her voice has never warned? Is there no mourner, that her "oil of joy" has never comforted? Are there no perishing souls, whose blood is on her skirts? No lost, who will stand up, and witness, at the awful day, of her neglect of men, and disregard of Him who died for them? Brethren, the answers to these searching questions frown upon our sight at every turn, and their intolerable glare will blind us in the day of judgment. The Church is not like "Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good," and "healing all them that were oppressed of the devil;" and therefore, God is not with her, in light, and peace, and power. She sits and waits for men to come to her. She treats them coldly when they come. She stints them in the blessings which her Saviour left with her. She hides her talent in a napkin in the earth. She starves her children, and she dwarfs herself. When she might be the joy of the whole earth, she is scarcely counted of, among the nations. When she should be the light of the world, the flame upon her altars seems glimmering, to go out. Men are forced from her scant fountain, to the broken cisterns of the world. She fails to enforce her godly discipline, and they resort to Temperance Societies. She disregards the law of mutual love, and they associate in Masonic Lodges and Odd Fellowships. She casts away from her the

strength and comfort of sacred communities, and religious brotherhoods, and they are tempted to the parallelograms of Owen, or the phalanxes of Fourier. What are love feasts, and class meetings, but cold, faint shadows of the ancient intercourse of Christian piety and love? What are anxious seats, and experience meetings, but the clumsy counterfeits of primitive practice, in the meekness, and humility, and unreserve of an encouraged, but uncompelled, confession; seeking of them whom Christ has authorized to bind and loose for Him, "such godly counsel and advice, as may tend to the quieting of his conscience, and the removing of all scruple and doubtfulness?"¹ Why should a Church, that is corrupt in doctrine and idolatrous in worship, appropriate the heir-looms of the elder days, in sisters of charity, and brotherhoods of mercy? Why should a Church, which makes her constant and her confident appeal to an intelligent examination of her standards and her formularies, in the clear light of the most ancient times, proverbially neglect the thorough training of her children, in religious knowledge? Why should a Church, whose members are abundant in the riches of this world, and who go before their neighbours in the things which gratify the sense and taste, grudge of the crumbs that fall from her full table, and leave the ministry to starve, the altar to decay? There are no worthy answers to these questions, short of penitent confession, and positive assurance of amendment. For want of this, God turns His face away.

¹ Invitation to the Holy Communion, in the Book of Common Prayer.

There may be outward seeming, and numerical increase. But love is wanting, and so life. We have not peace at home. We have not strength abroad. We see not "eye to eye." We clasp not hand to hand. We beat not heart to heart. We are not "with one accord," as they of old time, "in prayer and supplication."¹ We stand not fast, like that Philippian phalanx, "in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel."² Our onward march loiters and lags. The ground we occupy is occupied with doubt and insecurity. The glow of confidence is wanting to our hearts. Our faces beam not with the light of hope. The Lord goes not with us to battle. And so Victory sits not on our banner.

My brethren, with the beautiful example, which the text presents, before us, while abounding grace, to make it real, and to make it ours, waits our acceptance, we are without excuse if we continue longer as we are. Let us betake ourselves to fervent prayer, that God will mercifully raise up His power, "and come among us, and with great might succour us."³ Especially, let us beseech Him, to send His Holy Ghost, and "pour into our hearts, that most excellent gift of charity, which is the bond of peace, and of all virtues."⁴ We have from God the doctrines of His Gospel, in their purity; the order of His Church, in its perfection. We need more faith. We need more love. We need the "faith which

¹ Acts, i. 14.

² Philippians, i, 27.

³ Collect for fourth Sunday in

Advent.

⁴ Collect for Quinquagesima Sunday.

works by love." Faith, to deny ourselves, and bear the Cross. Faith, to take all God's word, and to wait all God's time. Faith, to look off from flesh and sense, and to cast all our confidence on Christ. Faith, to encounter opposition. Faith, to endure affliction. Faith, to make light of tribulation. Faith, to sell all we have, and give to the poor, and find treasure in heaven. Faith, to cast down all earthly thoughts, and human things, before the Cross's foot; bringing all "into captivity to the obedience of Christ." "Looking unto Jesus," as "the Author and Finisher of our faith,"¹ we shall reflect His purity, and catch the fervour of His love. It will consume in us all selfish and all sensual thoughts. It will inflame us with the ardours of an all-embracing and an all-enduring charity. We shall crucify ourselves, with Him, upon His Cross; and so be raised, and reign with Him, upon His throne.

My dear young brethren, who are to go forth from these sacred walls, to-day, to mingle with the world, and, as the servants of the Cross—if God shall please, its ministering servants—to help us in our holy work, of winning souls for Jesus Christ; to you, in this behalf, I most especially appeal. Your entrance on the crowded stage of human life is at a most eventful period, for the trial of your spirits. It is an age of steam, and stir, and strife. An age, whose rapid progress in all physical developments threatens to sensualize the soul. An age, in which the work of generations is atchieved in single days. An age of

¹ Hebrews, xii. 2.

rapid gains, and rapid losses, of change, and chance, unsettled, and unsettling; contemptuous of precedents, and greedy only for the new. In such an age, the Church must be severely tried. The Church is old. The Church is calm. The Church is steady. The Church is heavenly, and for heaven. Let nothing tempt you from her peaceful, heaven-protected precincts. Be not seduced by any show of new experiments. Be not elated by any flattering thought of individual effort, or of individual influence. Man was not made to be alone. Man has a social nature. The Church was made for man, as he is social in his nature, that so his social nature may be one with God. In her, God sets His word. In her, God stores His grace. She is established on the Rock of everlasting Ages. She is compacted by the trials of near twenty centuries. She is the living Body of the ever-living Lord; and the true life is in her, for all that live by faith in Him. Admitted, in His infinite mercy, to be partakers of such grace, and heirs of such a hope, give yourselves frankly up to Him, to wait, and do His will. In humbleness, in holiness, in self-denial, in willingness to bear, in readiness to do, in cheerfulness to suffer, be followers of Him, whose meat and drink it was to do His Father's will; who went about to do men good. The Church's glorious and tremendous trust, for Jesus Christ, is in the souls for which He died. The Church's work is, therefore, spirit-work. Not to be done amid the heat and noise of controversy; not to be done through the polemic rage of pamphlets and of newspapers; not to be done in the Conventions and Councils of the

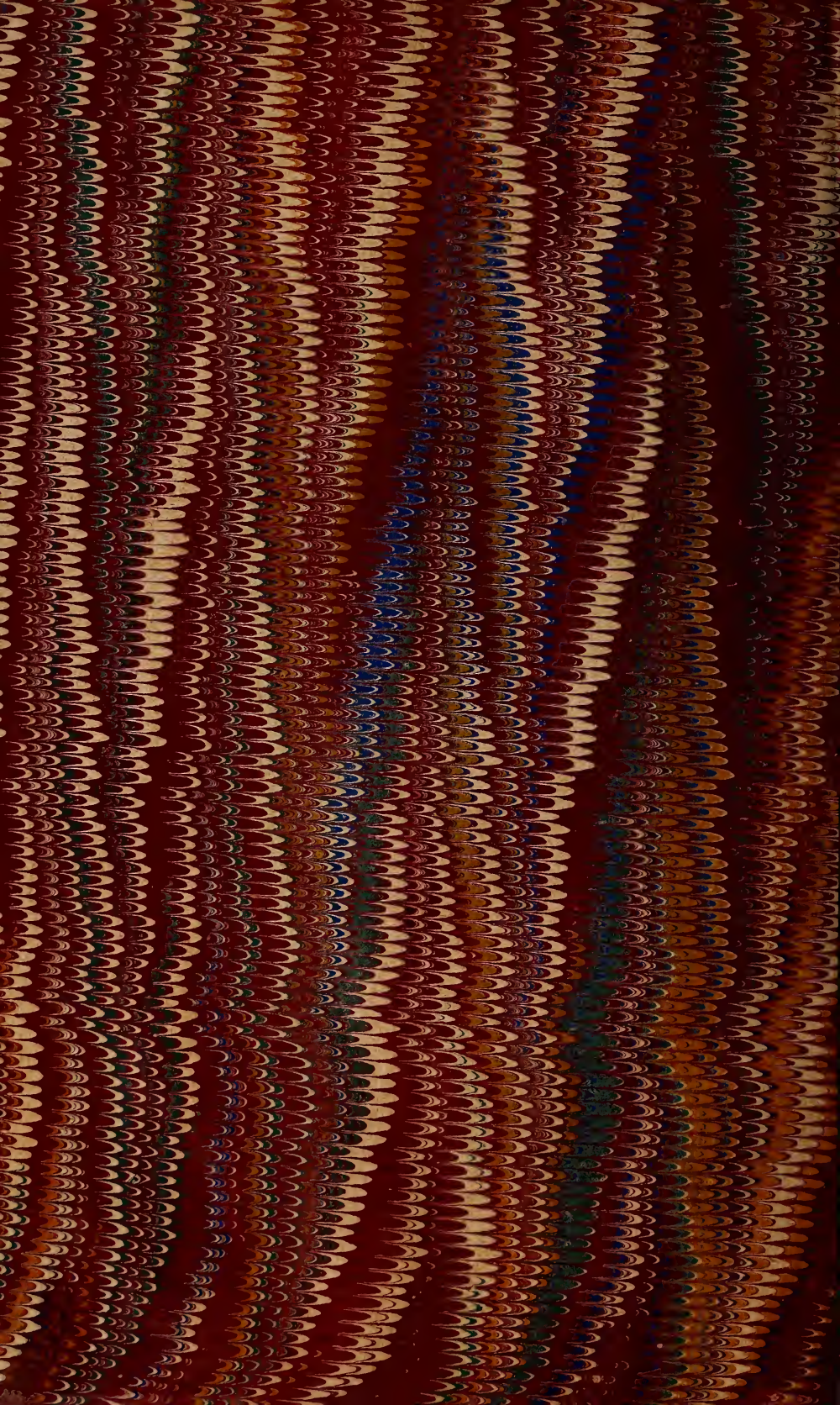
Church. It must be done in private. It must be done in the closet. It must be done in the sanctuary. It must be done in schools. It must be done in families. It must be done in parishes. It must be done, in the room of sickness. It must be done in the death-chamber. It must be done, with soul to soul: teaching with the wisdom which is from God; drawing with the cords of a man. The qualifications for it are not such as shine in courts, or camps; or fit for commerce, or diplomacy, or legislation. The men that do it, must be men of thoughtfulness and prayer. They must be humble-minded men, that count themselves as less than nothing, but as Christ supplies their strength. They must be men, whom nothing human, nothing earthly, can remove from their allegiance to the Cross. In a word, they must be as Barnabas, good men, and "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," if they would add much people to the Lord. To go about, to do men good, must be their mark and aim. To deny themselves in personal indulgence: to deny themselves in the domestic charities: to forego, if need require, the cheerful joy of wife and children, that they may please Him who hath chosen them to be His soldiers; and, in any case, to make it secondary to the holy warfare, which they war: to make no account of station or emolument: to make no account of climate or society: to make no account of effort or of self-denial: to make no account of health, or life: to work, if so alone the gospel can be preached, with their own hands, like holy Paul, that no man be at charges for them; and to know nothing, in all their service for

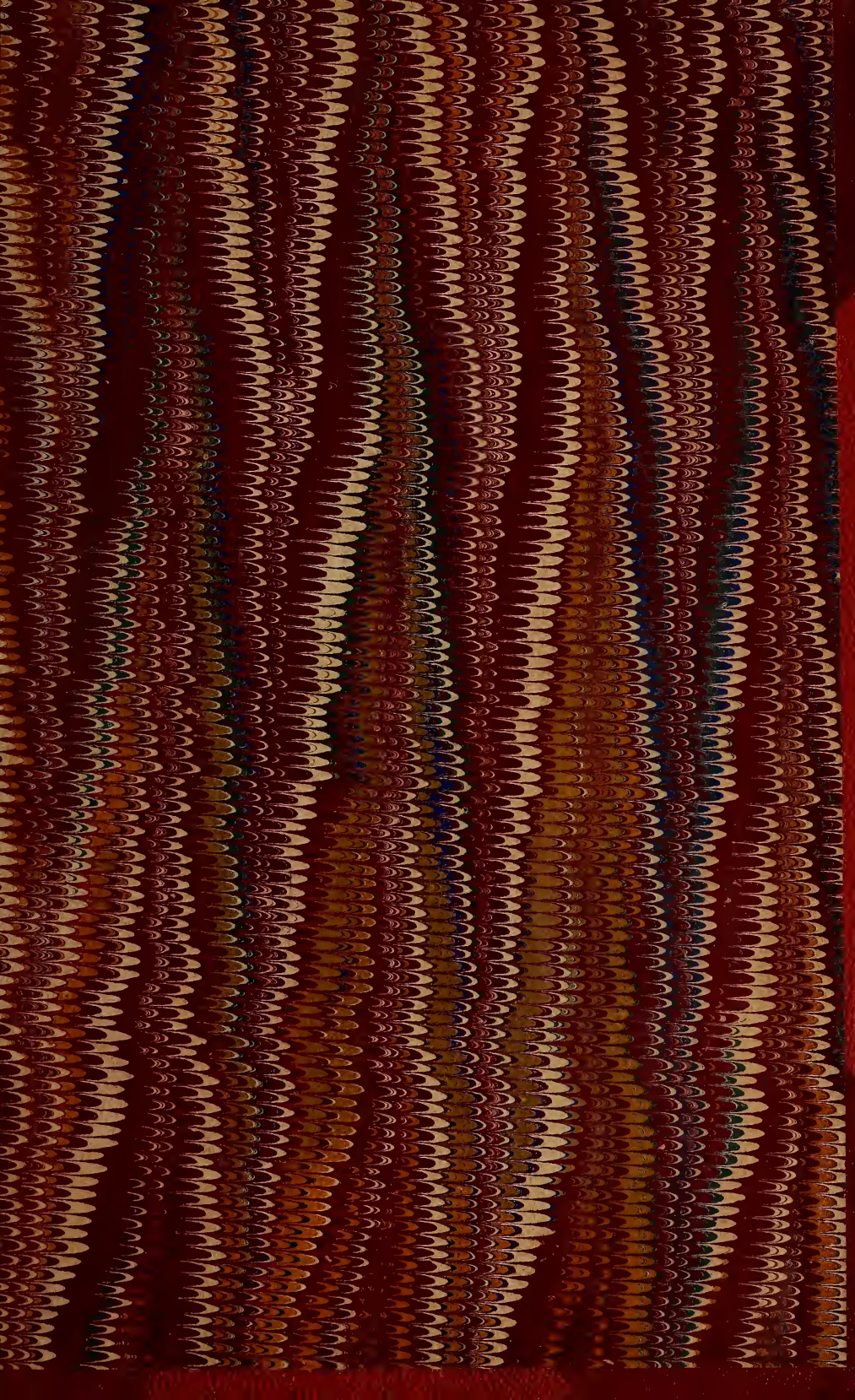
the Church, but Jesus Christ, and Him as crucified, must be their strength, their glory, and their joy.

The Church's work, my dear young brethren, accumulates upon her hands. She is now ages in arrears. The world outruns her, and so runs to ruin. To arrest the headlong hurry of this fearful race is the great problem of our age. Men take no time to think. Men take no time to study. Men take no time to pray. They hasten, for they know not what, they know not whither; and, in their heat and hurry, rush into the grave. To win them, through the grace of Christ, to better thoughts and better things, you, if it please God to receive you to His ministry, will now go forth. To be successful with them, you must win their confidence. Not by concessions to their errors. Not by any compromise with their worldliness. Not by partaking in their sins. But by convincing them that you seek them, not theirs. By proving to them that your only effort is to save their souls. To do so, you must watch for every opportunity of good. You must be instant in season, and out of season. You must win them by consideration for their personal comfort. You must win them by being interested in their personal interests. You must win them by sympathy with their domestic joys and sorrows. You must win them through their children; as the shepherd leads the flock, by carrying, in his arms, the new-dropped lamb. Think of the blessedness of your immortal work. Think of its present comfort. Think of its everlasting glory. Think that you are fellow-workers in it, with all the sacramental host of God's elect; with the innu-

merable company of angels; with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Think, that, to do so, is to be as "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who went about doing good." And think, how He will smile upon you, from His throne, and that dear smile beam heaven upon your soul, if only one, and that the least accounted of, of men, shall so be won to Him: "verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

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